

Representatives
Judy Clibborn
Fred Jarrett

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WA STATE DEPT
OF PRINTING 98501

Town Hall Meetings
Saturday, February 23rd

Newport Senior High School Library
4333 Factoria Boulevard SE
Bellevue, WA 98006-1999
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Kennydale Elementary School
1700 NE 28th St
Renton, WA 98056
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

See you there!



Representative
Judy Clibborn
360-786-7926
clibborn.judy@leg.wa.gov



Representative
Fred Jarrett
360-786-7894
jarrett.fred@leg.wa.gov

Dear Neighbor:

2008 Legislative Session is upon us and we are preparing to make some very important decisions regarding transportation in Washington, especially in the Puget Sound region.

There are significant problems that must be understood, and addressed. Some of these are inherited, some probably could have been prevented – but they all must be dealt with.

In the central Puget Sound region, there are two major safety and congestion relief projects on everyone’s minds – the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the 520 bridge. Replacement of the southern portion of the Viaduct is underway and we are on track to developing a funding plan for the 520 bridge. Although tolling will be a major topic of conversation in Olympia, please understand that we will stand in the way of any plan to implement new tolls in 2008.

Enclosed is information about the challenges that our transportation system is facing including:

- Background on how we got here
- Long-term solutions under consideration
- The latest on the 520 Bridge and I-405

We’d appreciate hearing what you think about transportation or any other issue that is on your mind.

Sincerely,

Judy Clibborn Fred Jarrett

Judy and Fred

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

While our population grew and roads and highway use nearly doubled starting in the 70s and into the 90s, the state neglected to keep up with transportation investments. It has only been in the last decade that we have begun to attempt to catch up.

In 1996, we made a commitment to transit. More recently the Legislature approved and the voters affirmed a gas tax increase to fund additional highway projects. Still we are only able to commit to about half of the necessary investments for the next 20-25 years.

Reduced Federal Funding

The federal government continues to shift responsibilities for transportation to states and local governments. A generation ago, freeways were built with 90 percent of the funding coming from the federal government. Today, less than a fifth comes from Washington, D.C., and those funds are rapidly disappearing.

Failure of Roads and Transit Package

Most recently Proposition 1 failed. Different “experts,” even when looking at the same information, identify a variety of different reasons for Prop. 1’s failure. We believe that the package was simply too big and that voters didn’t really believe that all of those projects were actual priorities or that they would be delivered on time.

Weakening Gas Tax



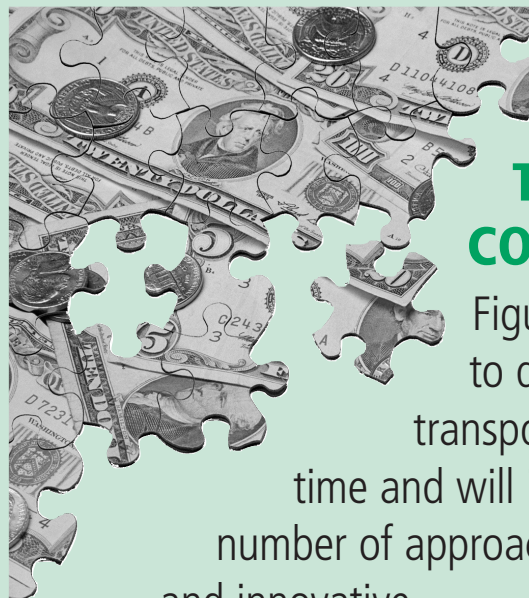
It is also important to understand that the buying power of the gas tax is weakening and will continue to decline for two reasons:

The gas tax is not indexed to inflation but is a per-gallon-used tax. Each year the price of steel, concrete, land and labor rise while the gas tax remains the same.

With higher oil prices, people are switching to higher-mileage and alternative-fuel vehicles, and they’re driving less. This results in less revenue generated per mile driven.

Representatives Judy Clibborn & Fred Jarrett

2008 Transportation Report



LONG-TERM IDEAS ON THE TABLE FOR CONGESTION RELIEF

Figuring out our strategy to deal with financing our transportation system will take time and will include discussions of a number of approaches, both conventional and innovative.

Keeping Projects on Schedule

There are several billion dollars of projects aimed relieving congestion in Puget Sound with many of those projects directed here on the Eastside. Our challenge is to keep the Department of Transportation accountable so they can continue to deliver projects on time and on budget.

Improving Current System

The existing transportation system doesn't perform as well as it could. At the peak of commute our freeways move as few as half of the cars they could. And our transit systems could significantly increase the number of commuters to regional job centers. These improvements would require changes in the way we operate roads and transit.



HOT Lanes

High Occupancy/Toll or HOT lanes will be implemented on a trial basis along SR 167. Right now the carpool lanes on SR 167 aren't moving as many cars as they could. HOT lanes would allow solo drivers to use the carpool lane for a toll. As traffic gets more congested, the price of using the lane will increase. The tolls will reset every few minutes to ensure that the highways are moving as many cars as possible.

The pilot project on SR 167 will allow the Legislature to determine whether HOT lanes can work on other roadways to relieve congestion and fund future projects.

Congestion Pricing

This approach is similar to the HOT lane concept, but the toll would be applied to the entire roadway or bridge. Under Congestion Pricing, the tolls would vary based on how congested the road is — as traffic gets worse, tolls increase, and vice versa.



2008 SESSION

This year we are in the middle of a short, 60-day session, so we are focusing on current plans to deal with congestion and improve safety. We are also dealing with the failure of the Roads and Transit proposal — Proposition 1 — and are looking for new ways to address both congestion and safety concerns. Our number 1 objective is to keep the projects that we have promised moving toward completion here in Puget Sound and statewide.



520 Bridge Replacement

The aging 520 bridge is one of the state's most vulnerable stretches of road. Its potential collapse presents the greatest safety risk and congestion problem facing cross Lake Washington commuters.

We are working to craft a plan to pay for the new bridge. Even after redesigning the bridge and accounting for federal funding, we are \$2 billion short.

There are several financing plans being shopped around, and tolling will be part of the solution, there is no getting around it. But simply slapping a toll on the bridge to cover the entire replacement costs would result in \$10 tolls and divert thousands of drivers to I-90 or other roads.

At this time it would be foolish to predict exactly what the final plan will look like. But we will only support a plan that keeps the state in control of the tolls, with the Legislature having final say over how and when tolls are applied.

I-405 through Bellevue — Relieving Congestion, Improving Safety

The I-405, South Bellevue Widening Project will help to relieve congestion at one of the worst I-405 bottlenecks — the drive in and out of Bellevue.

Construction began in July of 2007 and will be completed by late 2009. A new northbound lane from 112th Ave SE to I-90 will be added and the northbound bridge of Coal Creek Parkway will be widened.

Between I-90 and SE 8th a new lane will be built in each direction. Plans to remove the Wilburton Tunnel, build a new, three-lane, southbound bridge over I-90, and convert the existing southbound bridge over I-90 to carry the northbound HOV lane will also be completed by late 2009.



Photo by Ken Lund - Flickr.com